

# *fast* FACTS...

April 2003

*about Sedgwick County Government*



## *Ark Valley Lodge*

### What is the Ark Valley Lodge?

The Arkansas Valley Lodge (Ark Valley Lodge) was established in 1885 as the home of AF&AM Prince Hall Masons, Lodge No. 21. Membership was comprised of the community's most socially prominent and professionally successful African-American men. The Masons had been installed at 517 N. Main for eleven years; but, as the building began to deteriorate, a site was purchased at 615 N. Main, the current location of the Ark Valley Lodge. In 1910, utilizing the business resources and services of the members, the Ark Valley Masons designed and built the second lodge in the heart of what was referred to as Wichita's "Black Business District."

### What was the original structure used for?

The original structure had three elevations and measured 28 x 100 feet. The first floor of the Lodge was rented out by the Masons to various businesses in the community. The second floor was used as a local dance hall and social center for the community. The third floor housed the meeting room for the Lodge Brothers until it was completely destroyed by a severe windstorm in 1940.

### Why was the Ark Valley Lodge closed?

In 1974, the Urban Renewal Authority purchased the Lodge, and the members of the Ark Valley Lodge relocated their meetings. Since then, the building has remained closed and inaccessible. Natural elements and the passage of time have contributed to the building's further deterioration.

### How can I get more information?

For more information call Sedgwick County Communications at 660-9370.



### What is Sedgwick County's role with the Ark Valley Lodge?

Sedgwick County pledged to reaffirm the historic status of the Ark Valley Lodge, and in July 2000, the Board of Sedgwick County Commissioners endorsed a project to restore the Ark Valley Lodge. Initially, a citizen committee, termed the Ark Valley Lodge Committee, was convened to discuss potential uses of the Ark Valley Lodge, with consideration for the historical significance of the Lodge to the then burgeoning Black Business Community of 1910.

### What are the plans for the Lodge's renovation?

The Ark Valley Lodge will be restored to two stories and will feature an early 1900's styled main lobby. The Lodge will provide additional office space for Sedgwick County, and the primary tenant will be the Sedgwick County Community Developmental Disability Organization (CDDO). In addition, a large meeting room is planned for the first floor, with period woodworking and finishes throughout. The estimated project budget is \$1.89 million. The Ark Valley Lodge renovation project should be completed in September 2003.

### Why is Sedgwick County supporting this project?

Sedgwick County Government is proud to support this project to preserve the history of such an important part of all of our heritage and an enduring legacy to the contributions and achievements of African-Americans in Wichita.

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